




## Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Introducing Higher Level Stewardship funded conservation management at Bedfords Park, Dagnam Park, Havering Country Park & Cranham Brickfields Local Nature Reserve
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Andrew Curtin
<b>CMT Lead:</b>	Cynthia Griffin
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Benjamin Sanderson x 2873
<b>Policy context:</b>	Local Development Framework NERC Act (2006) Local Biodiversity Action Plan Parks & Open Spaces Strategy Single Data List
<b>Financial summary:</b>	Higher Level Stewardship should secure revenue of £327k over 10 years and £79k over the first 2 years as a contribution towards capital works required to implement improved management regimes. <b>Total Income £406k.</b>
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Towns and Communities
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	Yes

Seen & approved by me 10/10/13  


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### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Part A – Report seeking decision

#### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is recommended that London Borough of Havering enters into a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England for its landholdings at Havering Country Park, Bedfords Park Local Nature Reserve, Dagnam Park (including The Manor Local Nature Reserve) and Cranham Brickfields Local Nature Reserve.

#### AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Council's constitution - 3.3 POWERS OF MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Financial responsibilities

(c) In consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member to apply for, accept and manage external funding up to a limit of £500,000 per grant in support of any function within their Directorate provided that any financial contributions by the Council are made from within existing budgets.

#### STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Bedfords Park, Dagnam Park & Havering Country Park are three of the most important sites in the north of the Borough from a nature conservation, historic, amenity and recreation point of view. The wildlife interest of these sites has been sufficient for them to be recognised in the London Plan as Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. Bedfords Park & Dagnam Park are also designated as Local Nature Reserves along with Cranham Brickfields. Management costs are currently met by the Parks Service who are responsible for these sites.

Following the successful introduction of Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) schemes at both Rainham Marsh and the Ingrebourne Valley, officers have been working with Natural England and other partners including English Heritage and Essex Wildlife Trust to bring forward a new scheme covering Bedfords, Dagnam, Havering Country Park & Cranham Brickfields Local Nature Reserve.

HLS is essentially an agri-environment scheme aimed primarily at farmers. Local authorities as landowners are also able to apply for HLS, although the scheme is allocated on a

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competitive basis and only as budgets allow.

There are a range of HLS annual options and capital items which are individually tailored to deliver maximum environmental benefits for wildlife, landscape, historic environment and resource protection. Staff have worked with Natural England to create a package of works for the proposed sites to meet these objectives.

The HLS scheme is divided into annual revenue and capital payments. The annual revenue payments are for the on-going maintenance of biodiversity and landscape features such as management of species rich grassland, management of scrub and woodland and pond maintenance. LBH will receive annual revenue payments of £33,286.50 per annum (£27,851.39 in the first year), a total of £327,429.89 for the ten year duration of the scheme. The breakdown of these annual payments per site is as follows:

Havering Country Park	£2,079
Bedfords Park LNR	£7,600.10
Dagnam Park	£22,781
Cranham Brickfields LNR	£826.40

Capital payments are for one-off works such as fencing, tree management and tree planting. The payments for capital items will total £79,306.30 with works needing to be completed by 28th February 2015. There is the potential for additional capital items to be added to the agreement in future years, subject to availability of funding from Natural England. The breakdown of capital items per site is as follows:

Havering Country Park	£6,127.60
Bedfords Park LNR	£35,065.20
Dagnam Park	£36,848.50
Cranham Brickfields LNR	£1,265

The total funding for the HLS scheme is anticipated to be **£406,736.19** over the 10 years of the agreement.

The annual revenue and capital items outlined within the agreement over the next ten years are works that the Council should undertake as best practice, and to some extent already do. With the assistance of the HLS scheme the Council would only need to partly fund rather than wholly fund these works. As well as the financial advantage, the Council will also benefit from advice on biodiversity improvements from Natural England, the national conservation body.

If approved the agreement would commence in March 2013 for a duration of ten years completing on 28th February 2023. There is a break clause after 5 years which would allow the Council to withdraw from the agreement with no penalty.

### ***Introducing grazing***

One of the benefits of HLS will be improved management of the species rich grassland at the four sites under consideration. Evidently, over a number of years parts of these sites have become overgrown with scrub and the grassland is gradually losing its wildlife interest. Hay cutting is undertaken on an ad-hoc basis, often with breaks in continuity, leading to the development of rank grassland dominated by one or two species.

The objective of grassland management under HLS is to contribute towards the enhancement and maintenance of a diverse grassland habitat. This will be achieved by a combination of hay cutting and the introduction of sustainable long term grazing management.

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In order to implement grazing, stock control options are one of the main considerations along with cattle handling facilities and water supply. The most suitable option would be permanent stock fencing around some areas of each site. In order to facilitate this, capital is available under HLS. Natural England have also offered LBH a one-off grant of £10k, in addition to HLS payments, to pay for infrastructure such as kissing gates to maintain access for all.

Implementing new grazing schemes will be undertaken with considerable care. It is anticipated that the local community have a number of legitimate concerns about the introduction of grazing and the erection of fencing within each site. Consultation is currently underway with local site users and Friends of Groups who are already very supportive.

#### ***Environmental Implications***

There would be no adverse environmental implications arising from these proposals. Work carried out through the HLS scheme will enhance the biodiversity value of the Council's landholdings.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Continue present management or withdraw from management altogether. These options have been rejected as the Council would fail to fulfil its statutory duties outlined in the policy context. The opportunity for additional revenue and capital funding via HLS for parks management would also be forfeited. (Please see Financial Implications & Risks below).

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

Formal consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders including English Heritage, Natural England and the Local Biological records office as part of the application process. The full application is available electronically. Informally, consultation has been undertaken with Havering Wildlife Project, Friends of Bedfords Park and Friends of Dagnam Park.

### **NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Benjamin Sanderson

Designation: Regeneration Officer – Environmental Programmes

Signature:



Date:

## **Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

In addition to the legal implications already highlighted in the body of the report a signed agreement must be returned to Natural England for the agreement to commence in March 2013. The Council has contact with a grazier who manages the established conservation grazing contract on behalf of the Corporation of London. He has agreed in principle to offer the Council his services to implement grazing schemes on its sites and at no cost. Should we proceed with plans to implement grazing it would be necessary to draw up a legal agreement between the Council and the grazier setting out terms and conditions. We already have experience of setting this up for both Rainham Marshes and the Ingrebourne Marshes at Hornchurch Country Park.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

**The proposed High Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS) should secure £327k of revenue over 10 years and £79k capital.**

Failure to undertake management work associated with each HLS option for which grant funding is received annually may be considered by Natural England as a breach of agreement and the Council may have to repay any grant received. The operations necessary to achieve the prescriptive outcomes of HLS options will be embedded in the work programme of the Parks Service to ensure that they are met.

If the delivery of planned works could not take place for any reason such as adverse weather conditions, early dialogue with Natural England would take place so that they are aware of the situation. With their agreement the grant award could be revised accordingly, and the agreement would therefore not be defaulted.

Whilst many of the management prescriptions in the HLS scheme are already carried out by the Council there are some additional works that require implementing such as fencing. There would be some additional capital cost for the Council to deliver the HLS scheme effectively, estimated to be in the region of £60,000. It is anticipated that these works can be accommodated within existing budgets or through further grant funding from the North Thames Veolia Trust (former Veolia Havering Riverside Trust) and/or SITA.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

The delivery of both the annual and capital elements of the HLS scheme will be the responsibility of the Parks Service, supported by the Regeneration Officer – Environmental Programmes. This can be assimilated into their regular work programmes.

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The introduction of HLS at the four sites will help to implement management which is beneficial for biodiversity, the landscape and resource protection. There are no equalities and social inclusion implications associated with this.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

HLS application AG00418710

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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

*Delete as applicable*

~~Proposal NOT agreed because~~

**Details of decision maker**

Signed 

Name: Cynthia Griffin

CMT Member title: GROUP DIRECTOR, CULTURE, COMMUNITY  
and Economic Development

Date: 14/10/13

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, ~~Jan~~ Andy Buckmaster, Committee Administration & Member Services Manager in the ~~the~~ Bryson Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on 15 OCTOBER 2013

Signed 

